

Comprehensive Plan Meeting Minutes

April 16, 2025 Meeting Minutes

Hybrid Meeting

In attendance were: James Searing (Chair), Tim Luccaro (Vice-Chair), Michael Kennerley, Marnie Newman, Peter Brussock, Eric Allen, Nancy Stock Allen, Kay Reiss, Elaine Crooks (via zoom), Kevin Morrissey (Board of Supervisors Liaison), Hanna Howe (Board of Supervisors Liaison), John Francis (Board of Supervisors)

Public: Michael Roedig (Bucks County Planning Commission, Director of Planning Services), Lisa Wolff (Bucks County Planning Commission, Senior Planner), Deanna Miller (Bucks County Planning Commission, Planner/Recycling Program Coordinator), Josh Perlsweig, Terry Clemons, Esq., Michael Farbotnik, Kaitlin Farbotnik, Shannon Pendleton, Gary Manoff, Phil Johnson, George Ashford, Malaika Spencer, Sam Marlow, Marissa Cloutier, Drew Augenblick, Devin Cornia

Absent: Marnie Newman

I. The meeting was called to order at 7:03 P.M. by Mr. Searing and there was a quorum.

II. Approval of Meeting Minutes

Upon a motion by Mr. Luccaro, seconded by Elaine Crooks, the March 19, 2025 meeting minutes were unanimously approved

III. Issue Forum- Sustaining Agriculture

Mr. Searing opened the forum. He spoke about the data surrounding agriculture, the importance, and the public support for farms in Solebury Township.

Mr. Perlsweig gave an overview of the current status of farm, including financial challenges and grant opportunities. He spoke to the work the Solebury Farm Committee is doing to help farmers with agricultural accessory ordinance and looking into the housing issue.

Mr. Searing asked about grants available to farmers.

Mr. Perlsweig clarified there were grants from the USDA for value-added products.

Ms. Pendleton asked about what the top priorities were for the Farm Committee.

Mr. Perlsweig spoke to the ordinance that the Farm Committee worked on that dealt with accessory uses and on-farm experiences.

Mr. Manoff gave an example of value-added production being an experience such as cider tasting.

Mr. Farbotnik gave an overview of modern farming. He spoke to the disconnect there was between consumers and producers. He also spoke to sustainable agriculture and discussed how the Township could help farms by removing barriers.

Mr. Allen questioned about the chemicals used in farming and what the Township could do.
Mr. Farbotnik stated that if chemicals are replaced, the Township would need to accept GMOs.

Ms. Crooks asked if there was a way to have preserved property owners utilize their land for agriculture.

Mr. Farbotnik suggested that the Township encourage the landowners to connect with a farmer to utilize the land for agriculture or at least have someone maintain the land.

Mr. Perlsweig commented on the enhancements made on the land he owns to increase water retention and improve soil health.

Ms. Farbotnik spoke to the chemicals used in farming and emphasized that a farmer should not be treated differently from homeowner.

Attorney Clemons discussed the agricultural accessory use ordinance the Farm Committee recently forwarded to the Township Board of Supervisors for adoption. He further talked about the upcoming work the Farm Committee is looking into relative to farm worker housing. Further, he discussed Agricultural Security Areas and Pennsylvania State laws such as the Right to Farm act and ACRE law.

Mr. Johnson asked if the agricultural accessory use ordinance would have an effect on conversation easements.

Attorney Clemons stated that it would not have a direct effect but the ordinance and easements go hand in hand.

Mr. Ashford asked if the ordinance had restrictions that would prevent bad interactions between residents and farmers.

Attorney Clemons stated there were restrictions on the number of events and noise.

Mr. Brussock commented that the Planning Commission, when contemplating an application, weighs the social, environmental, and economic values and felt as though many times complaints about farming is due to lack of familiarity.

IV. Public Comment

Mr. Johnson spoke to the difficulties farmers face, including taxes and vehicular traffic hazards when transporting equipment.

Ms. Spencer commented on the quality of farms in Solebury and discussed the difficulty the farm ran into with the zoning ordinance regulations.

Ms. Marlow stressed the importance of affordable housing for farm workers.

Ms. Cloutier commented on the importance of farms in the Township and suggested that the Township look at regulations for new businesses to require a certain percentage of their products come from a local farm.

Mr. Augenblick spoke to the history of his family's farm in the Township and the importance of farming.

Mr. Cornia commented on the quality of farms in Solebury and expressed that he was glad to see the effort the Township was putting into assisting farms.

V. Adjournment

Mr. Searing adjourned the meeting at 9:26 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Zachary J. Zubris".

Zachary Zubris
Zoning Officer/Permit Department Administrator
HARB Administrator
Solebury Township